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WZ JOSEPH WARREN.

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Engraved by Tho^s Illman, from the Painting by J.S. Copley, in Faneuil Hall, Boston.

JOSEPH WARREN.

Jos. Warren

JOSEPH WARREN.

To have been the most distinguished man slain in the battle of Bunker hill, "whose glorious name might turn a coward brave," is sufficient to secure an immortality of fame to the name of JOSEPH WARREN.

"Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career,"

and although the time and circumstances of his death present the most prominent point of observation, yet, the active part he took in the preliminary events, and the zeal and ability of his previous services in rousing the energies of his countrymen to resist oppression are interwoven with the history of his time, and entitle him to a place among the first of American patriots.

JOSEPH WARREN was born at Roxbury, near Boston, in the year 1741. At the age of fourteen he entered Harvard university, where he bore a high character for talents, perseverance, and correct deportment, as well as for a generous, courageous, and independent spirit. He graduated in 1759, and under the direction of Dr. Lloyd, an eminent physician of that day, he pursued the study of medicine. He commenced the practice of his profession in Boston, and very soon acquired a high reputation for skill and humanity, which, added to the favorable influence of a handsome person and courteous address, gave the promise of a brilliant professional career with the usual reward of industry and talent—influence and wealth. But "with all the endowments and accomplishments which make refined life desirable," and all the opportunities of gratifying professional ambition, no private interest, no love of ease, nor fear of consequences, could balance his sense of public duty. The passage of the celebrated stamp act first turned his attention to political subjects, and he entered upon a serious examination of the great question which then agitated the country. Occupied through the day by professional duties, he gave his nights to the investigation of the rights of the British parliament, and of the chartered rights of the colonies. Having thus formed his opinions by study and reflection, he delibe-

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rately took his stand on the side of his country, and with his constitutional ardor devoted himself to the common cause. His private interests suffered by neglect, and his pecuniary affairs became embarrassed; but young, and zealous in the performance of a paramount obligation, self was forgotten, and he labored to convince others, as he had satisfied himself, by reason and argument.

In 1768 Dr. WARREN addressed a letter to Governor Bernard, which was complained of as a libel, and an attempt was made to silence the author by an indictment, but the grand jury refused to find a bill. From this time forward his pen was restless, and his exertions unwearied, and as he enjoyed the affections and confidence of all classes, his influence was extensive.

Private meetings were held by him and other leaders of the opposition, which were attended by many persons in public offices, respectable mechanics, and others in the middle classes of society: in these meetings the most important matters were decided and afterwards carried into effect, while the hand of the master remained unseen.

But it was not by these means only that Dr. WARREN retained his influence over the spirits he had raised; he often found it necessary to restrain the impatient zeal of his friends, and held their confidence by his prudence and circumspection, as he had gained it by his intelligence and resolution.

In public, and especially in the face of the agents of the crown, he was bold and daring. One memorable instance of this occurred in 1775. He had delivered in 1772 the annual oration in commemoration of the massacre of the 5th of March, 1770, and when the time arrived for the appointment of an orator for 1775, he solicited the honor on that occasion in consequence of a threat uttered by some of the British officers, that they would take the life of any man who should dare to speak of the massacre on that anniversary.

Dr. WARREN was appointed, the day arrived, the Old South meeting-house was filled to overflowing; the aisles, the stairs, and even the pulpit, were occupied by British officers; the orator made his entrance by a ladder at the pulpit window; and cool, collected, and intrepid, he advanced into the midst of them and addressed the audience.

One of the British officers upon the pulpit stairs, in the mean time amused himself significantly by playing with a couple of musket balls, which he occasionally threw up and caught in his hand. "A solemn silence pervaded the whole assembly. The speaker seemed

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absorbed by his subject, and indifferent to every thing but his theme. It was momentarily expected that some interruption would take place. In a few minutes a drum was heard. Was it the signal for another outrage? It approached, and its sound broke the attention of the audience. With a countenance displaying the indignant feelings which the subject excited, his arm outstretched in an attitude of dignity, the orator paused till the noise should subside, and leave him at liberty to be heard again by the people. There was a slight movement round the house, the effect of intense interest; for not a hair of his head would have been hurt without the most signal revenge.* The interruption was short, and the oration proceeded without further disturbance.

Dr. WARREN was a member of the first committee of correspondence appointed by the city of Boston, in November 1772, which led to the subsequent union of the colonies. This committee made a report to their constituents, in which they gave a statement of the rights of the colonies, and of the violations attempted by the British ministry; this report was circulated through all the towns of the province, with an impressive letter to the inhabitants. We have not the means of knowing what part the subject of this memoir performed in this work, but there is no doubt of his sentiments, and that his efforts were constantly directed to a proper state of preparation to meet the crisis which he saw approaching. He had no confidence in the virtue of petitions or remonstrances, but he had a high opinion of the bravery of his countrymen and of their determination to defend their liberty. In a letter to Josiah Quincy, dated November 21st, 1774, at which time he was president of the provincial congress, he says, "It is the united voice of Americans to preserve their freedom or lose their lives in defence of it. Their resolutions are not the effects of inconsiderate rashness, but the sound result of sober inquiry and deliberation. I am convinced that the true spirit of liberty was never so universally diffused through all ranks and orders of people, in any country on the face of the earth, as it now is through all North America."

On the evening of the 18th of April, 1775, the design of the British to seize the military stores deposited at Concord, was communicated to Dr. WARREN, and he immediately despatched several messengers with the information, by various routes, to Lexington, to rouse the

* Note in Austin's life of Gerry, Vol. I. p. 85.

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militia in the neighborhood. He followed them himself, and was actively engaged in the action of the 19th. Whatever hope had been entertained of an amicable settlement of the dispute, was dissipated by the battle of Lexington; the war had begun, and large bodies of undisciplined and irregular troops—gathered in haste from the peaceful pursuits of civil life—began to assemble at Cambridge with such arms as they could command. The British forces, shut up in Boston by these brave and enthusiastic men, remained inactive until the middle of June. It was then determined by the provincial congress that Bunker hill should be occupied by a thousand men; a council of war was summoned to consider the proposition;* and on

* Dr. Dwight (Travels, Vol. I. p. 469,) has recorded a specimen of the deliberations of this council, derived from a gentleman who was a member of it, which may be regarded as a *military curiosity*. "After it had been resolved that a thousand men should occupy Bunker hill, a question arose concerning the number of cartridges which it would be proper for each man to carry. The younger officers, guided only by their books and their common sense, proposed that the detachment should receive sixty rounds.

"The older officers, some of whom probably knew the small quantity of ammunition then in the province, and dreaded every expense of it not demanded by absolute necessity, thought this number too great. One of them, who in his former life had been accustomed to the business of scouting, and valued himself upon being an expert huntsman, observed, that the young men evidently did not understand the business, and indeed could not, since they had had no military experience. 'War,' he said, 'is in substance the same thing with hunting. A skilful hunter never shoots until he is secure of his mark. On the contrary, he watches, and waits till the deer is fairly within his reach; and then, taking exact aim, almost always makes sure of his object. In the same manner ought soldiers to act. To shoot at men without being sufficiently near, and without taking aim, is to shoot at random, and only to waste your powder. A thousand men are ordered out to Bunker hill. Suppose each man to have five rounds of cartridges; the whole number will be five thousand. If half of these should take effect, (and if they do not, the men are not fit to be entrusted with cartridges,) the consequence is, that two thousand five hundred of the British soldiers fall. Does any man believe that they will keep the ground till two thousand five hundred are shot down? Let our men take aim, then, as I do when I am hunting deer, and five rounds will be enough.' Ten will be more than enough. Such was the opinion which in the main prevailed." And such, we may add, was the advice acted upon in the battle. General Dearborne, then a captain in Colonel Stark's regiment, says in his account of the action, "each man received a *gill cup* full of powder, fifteen balls, and one flint. As there were scarcely two muskets in a company of equal calibre it was necessary to reduce the size of the balls for many of them; and, as but a small proportion of the men had cartridge boxes, the remainder made use of powder horns and ball pouches. * * * Our men were intent on cutting down every officer whom they could discover in the British line. When any of them discovered one he would instantly exclaim, '*there! see that officer, let us have a shot at him,*' when two or three would fire at the same moment; and as our soldiers were excellent marksmen, and rested their muskets over the fence, they were sure of their object." Port Folio, 1818.

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the evening of the 16th, the detachment marched under the command of Colonel Prescott; but instead of halting at the designated hill, they advanced to Breed's hill, where in the course of the night, they threw up a redoubt and an entrenchment or breastwork, extending from its northern angle fifty or sixty feet towards Mystic river.

Four days previous to these transactions, Dr. WARREN had been appointed by the provincial congress, a major-general of their forces; we are not informed whether he assisted at the council of war, mentioned above, but think it most probable he did, and that it led to the conversation alluded to in Austin's life of Elbridge Gerry, and which together with the subsequent events, has been narrated by one of his biographers as follows: "On the 16th of June, he had a conversation with Mr. Gerry, at Cambridge, respecting the determination of congress to take possession of Bunker's hill. He said that for himself he had been opposed to it, but that the majority had determined upon it, and he would hazard his life to carry their determination into effect. Mr. Gerry expressed in strong terms his disapprobation of the measure, as the situation was such, that it would be in vain to attempt to hold it; adding, 'but if it must be so, it is not worth while for you to be present; it will be madness to expose yourself, where your destruction will be almost inevitable.' 'I know it,' he answered; 'but I live within the sound of their cannon; how could I hear their roaring in so glorious a cause, and not be there!' Again Mr. Gerry remonstrated, and concluded with saying, 'As surely as you go there, you will be slain.' General WARREN replied enthusiastically, '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*' The next day his principles were sealed with his blood. Having spent the greater part of the night in public business at Watertown, he arrived at Cambridge at about five o'clock in the morning, and being unwell, threw himself on a bed. About noon he was informed of the state of preparation for battle at Charlestown; he immediately arose, saying he was well again, and mounting a horse, rode to the place. He arrived at Breed's hill a short time before the action commenced. Colonel Prescott, 'the brave,' (as Washington was afterwards in the habit of calling him) was then the actual commanding officer. He came up to General WARREN to resign his command, and asked what were his orders. General WARREN told him he came not to command, but to learn; and having, as it is said, borrowed a musket and cartouch box from a sergeant who was retiring, he mingled in the thickest of the fight, animating and encouraging the men more by his example than it was possible to do in any other way. He fell

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after the retreat commenced, at some distance in the rear of the redoubt. A ball passed through his head, and killed him almost instantly. His body was thrown into the ground where he fell."

After the British troops had evacuated Boston, General WARREN's remains (which were identified by a particular false tooth) were exhumed and removed to Boston by the free-masons, and interred with their usual solemnities; and a eulogy was pronounced by Perez Morton, Esq., in presence of a numerous assembly in the stone chapel, beneath which the remains were finally deposited. General WARREN held the appointment of grand master of masons for the continent of America, by warrant from the earl of Dumfries, grand master of Scotland. The fraternity erected a monument to his memory on the battle field, which has given place to the magnificent pile, the corner stone of which was laid by Lafayette, in 1825, on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle.

On the 8th of April, 1777, the general congress passed a resolution to erect a monument to the memory of General WARREN, who "devoted his life to the liberties of his country, and in bravely defending them, fell an early victim." It was also resolved to provide for the education of his eldest son; and in July 1780, they further resolved to allow the half pay of a major-general, from the time of his death, until his youngest child should be of age for the education and maintenance of his three youngest children. These latter resolutions were accordingly carried into effect.

" Let laurels, drenched in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward his memory, dear to every muse,
Who, with a courage of unshaken root,
In honor's field advancing his firm foot,
Plants it upon the line that justice draws,
And will prevail, or perish in her cause.
'Tis to the virtues of such men, man owes
His portion in the good that Heaven bestows;
And when recording history displays,
Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days;
Tells of a few stout hearts, that fought and died
Where duty placed them, at their country's side;
The man that is not moved by what he reads,
That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,
Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,
Is base in kind, and born to be a slave."—COWPER.

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